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Tim W Hayes 03/02/2007 03:31:53 PM From DB/Inbox: Tim W Hayes

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Text:

C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 00468

SIPDIS
CX:

ACTION: POL
INFO: CONS TSR PMA ECON DCM AMB RAO FCS PA MGT DAO

DISSEMINATION: POL /1
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: AMB:RWILSON
DRAFTED: POL:DBURGER
CLEARED: DCM:NMCELDOWNEY, POL:KDEGNAN/CWESTLEY, PMA:MNARDI

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PP RUEHC RUEHZL RHMFISS
DE RUEHAK #0468 0601614
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P 011614Z MAR 07
FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1167
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 000468

SIPDIS

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DEPARTMENT ALSO FOR H - MARIA TREJO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/25/2022
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [TU](#) [AM](#) [AJ](#)
SUBJECT: HOPE FOR OUTREACH TO ARMENIA FADES

REF: ANKARA 286

Classified By: Ambassador Wilson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: Even as concern over a U.S. Congressional Armenian genocide resolution mounts, Turks from across the spectrum caution that in this election year Turkey will not/cannot make a dramatic gesture to Armenia. End summary.

12. (C) The hot-button issue of a possible Armenian genocide resolution (AGR) in the U.S. Congress plays prominently in the Turkish press and with political elites. Turkish predictions of a negative GOT response range wildly from a short-term symbolic but public act to those who expect the relationship to go into the deep freeze for an extended period of time. Beyond stating that passage of an AGR will have significant ramifications for the U.S.-Turkey relationship, officials have refused to make predictions on what Turkey may do in response. "Off the record," most suggest that U.S. use of Incirlik Air Base and ground transport arrangements to Iraq may be at risk; a minority believes the GOT will not go that far.

13. (C) In the meantime, hope for any significant steps toward Turkey-Armenia reconciliation is fading. Ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) MP Saban Disli told the Ambassador that PM Erdogan and FonMin Gul have concluded that that it is too hard to make any further outreach to the GOAM before elections, such as opening the border and normalizing relations. Regardless of what happens in Washington, after both election cycles are over, Turkey should be able to re-engage and make real progress, and Disli argued strongly that the government is prepared for this.

14. (C) If the issue were just Turkey and Armenia, Disli

continued, progress could be made immediately. But it involves a third party: Azerbaijan. That makes it especially tough to open the border for trade, as Turkey has long linked the border issue to a solution to Nagorno-Karabakh. Ambassador reiterated our interest in seeing the border open, but said other steps are available and Turkey should still consider a dramatic move.

15. (C) Turks from MFA and academia have stressed to us that the GOT could at this point make no further gestures toward Armenia because there has been no response to the series of actions it had already taken: the proposals to establish joint commissions, direct Yerevan-Istanbul flights, and the acceptance of 70,000 Armenians working in Turkey illegally. They likened it to Cyprus where the Turks had worked with "TRNC" leader Talat to get a "yes" vote on the 2004 Annan referendum, only to have the Greek Cypriots vote no and get into the EU anyway, leaving the Turkish Cypriots without even a trade regulation. The government's political capital was spent, they asserted.

16. (C) In February 21 MFA meetings, EUR/SE Director Doug Silliman encouraged the GOT to publicize more widely its efforts to improve relations with Armenia and to take further specific steps. Americas DG Vefahan Ocak admitted Turkey is weak on public relations and agreed that Turkey needs to make its case more convincingly. In a separate meeting, Americas DDG Ersin Ercin told Silliman that passage of the resolution may play right into the hands of ultranationalists, who are "ready to pour gas on the fire" of rising anti-Americanism. Ercin said inflammatory statements by Armenian officials also made it difficult for the GOT to maneuver and would only deteriorate relations further.

17. (C) Erdogan adviser Nabi Avci also maintains that the GOT cannot now offer further steps to the GOAM, even though -- as we pointed out -- such steps could help to head off an AGR. In this election year, it is "both too early and too late" for Turkey to make another move. Avci further warned that an AGR will make outreach even after November parliamentary elections extremely difficult, as nationalists and even some in the ruling party (should it win) will characterize outreach to Armenia as dictated by the U.S.

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WILSON